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ABSTRACT

As part of an effort to improve program quality at the Education Unit of Eastern Connecticut State University (ECSU), a survey was sent to ECSE graduates who were recommended for teacher certification from 1999 through 2001. This report presents ECSU graduate assessment of the Beginner Educator Support and Training (BEST) program. Of the 340 surveys mailed, 95 were returned, and 57 were from individuals who were employed full-time and were participating in BEST. Respondents completed a Likert-type scale about BEST participation. Most respondents (70% to 74.5%) indicated positive responses for questions about mentor knowledge about state standards and mentor availability and experience. Fewer respondents (50% to 69%) judged that mentors judged participants' instructions or that mentors taught in a manner consistent with BEST. Areas scoring 30% to 59% positive responses were that the program is coherent, helps in the understanding of state standards, and integrates preteaching education and current practice. Far fewer graduates (10% to 29%) thought that the program aids in working with the realities of education in contemporary schools or that the program helps guide behavior management. Some areas for further study are identified. (SLD)

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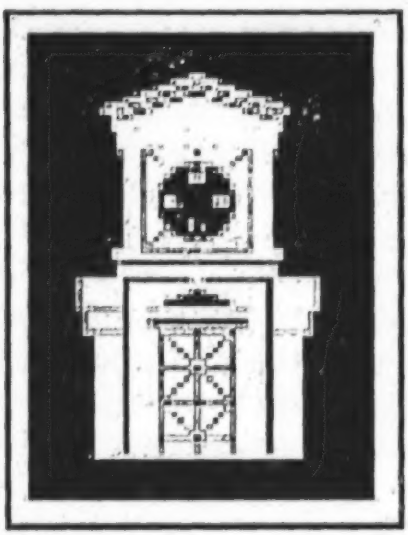
ED 467 436

Our Graduates Speak about B.E.S.T.

An analysis of survey data provided by ECSU graduates certified to teach and their assessment of the BEST program



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An Eastern Connecticut State University Research Brief

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Spring 2002

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Introduction

As part of an ongoing effort to improve program quality in the Eastern Connecticut State University Education Unit, a survey was sent to ECSU graduates who were recommended for teacher certification from 1999 through 2001. This survey was designed to explore two main issues, i.e.,

- their assessment of the BEST program and
- their assessment of the professional preparation they received at Eastern in terms of Connecticut's Common Core of Teaching.

Questions concerning BEST were modeled after a state survey designed to probe how certified teachers assess the professional preparation they received through institutions of higher learning; questions concerning Connecticut's Common Core of Teaching were taken from the Common Core documentation found on the Connecticut State Education Department's website. Questions probing our graduates' assessment of BEST as well as the professional preparation provided by the ECSU Education Unit were structured to allow for responses on a 5-point Likert Scale with 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree. See Exhibit 1, page 4.

This report represents ECSU student assessment data of the BEST program. BEST stands for Beginner Educator Support and Training, and is the state-adopted comprehensive teacher induction program that integrates both support and assessment of beginning teachers. Mentoring and portfolio development are central to the BEST process designed to ensure that Connecticut students are taught by teachers of the highest caliber, vis-à-vis their knowledge, skills and dispositions.

Procedure

Three hundred and forty surveys were mailed to students who were recommended for teacher certification from 1999 through 2001.

Data were analyzed using SPSS. Data transformations from interval to categorical data were performed so percentages in the following categories for each question could be calculated: Negative, Undecided and Positive. The procedure to create these categories was as follows: if respondent indicated a negative response to a question, e.g., in response to a question they scored a 1 or 2, the variable was recoded into a Negative category. Likewise if they scored a question 4 or 5, the variable was recoded into a Positive category. A response of 3 was recorded as Undecided.

Results

- 340 surveys mailed, 20 were returned as undeliverable and 95 were returned with completed surveys. This is a 30% response rate.
- of the 95 completed surveys, 57 were from individuals both employed full time and participating in the BEST program.
- Percent of respondents within each program were as follows: 40.5% Early Childhood, 17% Elementary, 11.5% middle, 8% Secondary and 23% HPE.
- The 52 survey respondents both employed full-time and a participant of BEST stated that of their BEST mentors:
    - 92% were in the same school
    - 51% teach in the same subject
    - 59% are in the same grade

- Percent of respondents within each degree category offered were as follows: 75% Undergraduate, 11.5% Post-Baccalaureate and 13.5% Graduate.
- Percentages for the recoded data concerning BEST in the POSITIVE category ranged from a high of 74% to a low of 17.6%

There were no areas scoring in the 75% -100% *positive* range.

The areas scoring 70% - 74.5% positive were:

- Q10B, mentor knowledgeable of CT state standards
- Q17B, mentor is in touch with realities of contemporary schools
- Q18B, mentor is available on a regular basis
- Q20B, mentor is experienced in guiding individuals to be a better teacher

The areas 50% -69% positive were:

- Q11B, mentor judges participants instructions
- Q12B, mentor teaches in a manner consistent with BEST
- Q14B, mentor helps evaluate and reflect on teaching techniques
- Q15B, mentor uses "real-life" teaching strategies

The areas scoring 30%-59% positive were:

- Q1B, is a coherent program
- Q2B, helps develop understanding of CT state standards
- Q6B, integrates pre-teaching education and current practice
- Q13B, mentor critically assesses teaching skills
- Q16B, mentor assesses progress in relation to CT state standards
- Q19B, mentor structures learning situations around real problems

The areas scoring 10%-29% positive were:

- Q3B, aids the realities of education in contemporary schools
- Q4B, prepares individuals for curriculum and assessment in the schools system
- Q5B, helps guide in behavior management

Conclusions and Recommendations

This research reveals how graduates of the ECSU teacher certification programs view the efficacy of BEST, a teacher induction program required by the Connecticut State Department of Education; newly certified teachers possessing an initial certificate have three years to successfully complete BEST in order to receive their provisional certification. Failing to move from initial to provisional certification in three years results in the loss of teaching certification Moreover, these data provide insight into how beginning teachers view this crucial program. Thus, given the pivotal role of BEST in the professional preparation and induction process of teachers in Connecticut, and in the spirit of continuous improvement, these findings should be carefully and thoroughly examined; some questions worth examining include:

- Q6B, integrates pre-teaching education and current practice.
  Should the integration be more comprehensive and if so, how can this be accomplished?

- Q1B, is a coherent program.
  Why do significant numbers of participants report it to be a relatively incoherent program?

- Q3B, aids the realities of education in contemporary schools.
  What can be done to better prepare BEST participants in this regard?

- Q4B, prepares individuals for curriculum and assessment in the schools system.
  What can be done to better meet the demands of district goals for curriculum and assessment?

- Q8, mentor is in the same subject.
  What can be done to better match beginning teachers with mentors? Would addressing this issue improve the overall quality of BEST?

- Q9, mentor is in the same grade.
  What can be done to better match beginning teachers with mentors? Would addressing this issue improve the overall quality of BEST?

Interval Data Results

Q1 Lacking a sense of coherence.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	4	6.7	6.9	6.9
	Disagree	13	21.7	22.4	29.3
	Undecided	18	30	31	60.3
	Agree	12	20	20.7	81
	Strongly Agree	11	18.3	19	100
	Total	58	96.7	100	
Missing	System	2	3.3		
Total		60	100		

Q2 Helps develop understanding of CT state standards.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	10	16.7	17.5	17.5
	Disagree	13	21.7	22.8	40.4
	Undecided	10	16.7	17.5	57.9
	Agree	21	35	36.6	94.7
	Strongly Agree	3	5	5.3	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	2	5		
Total		60	100		

Q3 Aids the realities of education in contemporary schools.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	16	26.7	28.1	28.1
	Disagree	19	31.7	33.3	61.4
	Undecided	10	16.7	17.5	78.9
	Agree	11	18.3	19.3	98.2
	Strongly Agree	1	1.7	1.8	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

Q4 Prepares individuals for curriculum and assessment in the schools system.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	15	25	26.3	26.3
	Disagree	19	31 7	33.3	59.6
	Undecided	10	16.7	17.5	77.2
	Agree	11	18.3	19.3	96.5
	Strongly Agree	2	3.3	3.5	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

Q5 Helps guide in behavior management.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	21	35	36.8	36.8
	Disagree	19	31.7	33.3	70.2
	Undecided	7	11.7	12.3	82.5
	Agree	10	16.7	17.5	100
	Strongly Agree	0	0	0	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	2	5		
Total		60	100		

Q6 Integrates pre-teaching education and current practice.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	13	21.7	22.8	22.8
	Disagree	12	20	21.1	43.9
	Undecided	13	21.7	22.8	66.7
	Agree	17	28.3	29.8	96.5
	Strongly Agree	2	3.3	3.5	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

Q10 Mentor knowledgeable of CT state standards.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	3	5	5.3	5.3
	Disagree	1	1.7	1.8	7
	Undecided	11	18.3	19.3	26.3
	Agree	24	40	42.1	68.4
	Strongly Agree	18	30	31.6	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

Q11 Mentor judges participants instructions.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	3	5	5.3	5.3
	Disagree	7	11.7	12.3	17.5
	Undecided	11	18.3	19.3	36.8
	Agree	20	33.3	35.1	71.9
	Strongly Agree	16	26.7	28.1	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

Q12 Mentor teaches in a manner consistent with BEST.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	9	15	15.8	15.8
	Disagree	24	40	42.1	57.9
	Undecided	14	23.3	24.6	82.5
	Agree	5	8.3	8.8	91.2
	Strongly Agree	5	8.3	8.8	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

Q13 Mentor critically assesses teaching skills.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	7	11.7	12.5	12.5
	Disagree	10	16.7	17.9	30.4
	Undecided	15	25	26.8	57.1
	Agree	15	25	26.8	83.9
	Strongly Agree	9	15	16.1	100
	Total	56	93.3	100	
Missing	System	4	6.7		
Total		60	100		

Q14 Mentor helps evaluate and reflect on teaching techniques.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	6	10	10.7	10.7
	Disagree	9	15	16.1	26.8
	Undecided	9	15	16.1	42.9
	Agree	16	26.7	28.6	71.4
	Strongly Agree	16	26.7	28.6	100
	Total	56	93.3	100	
Missing	System	4	6.7		
Total		60	100		

Q15 Mentor uses "real-life" teaching strategies.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	5	8.3	8.9	8.9
	Disagree	4	6.7	7.1	16.1
	Undecided	11	18.3	19.6	35.7
	Agree	21	35	37.5	73.2
	Strongly Agree	15	25	26.8	100
	Total	56	93.3	100	
Missing	System	4	6.7		
Total		60	100		

Q16 Mentor assesses progress in relation to CT state standards.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	9	15	15.8	15.8
	Disagree	10	16.7	17.5	33.3
	Undecided	11	18.3	19.3	52.6
	Agree	19	31.7	33.3	86
	Strongly Agree	8	13.3	14	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

Q17 Mentor is in touch with realities of contemporary schools.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	4	6.7	7	7
	Disagree	1	1.7	1.8	8.8
	Undecided	9	15	15.8	24.6
	Agree	24	40	42.1	66.7
	Strongly Agree	19	31.7	33.3	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

Q18 Mentor is available on a regular basis.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	4	6.7	7	7
	Disagree	5	8.3	8.8	15.8
	Undecided	6	10	10.5	26.3
	Agree	20	33.3	35.1	61.4
	Strongly Agree	22	36.7	38.6	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

Q19 Mentor structures learning situations around real problems.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	9	15	15.8	15.8
	Disagree	10	16.7	17.5	33.3
	Undecided	12	20	21.1	54.4
	Agree	14	23.3	24.6	78.9
	Strongly Agree	12	20	21.1	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

Q20 Mentor is experienced in guiding individuals to be a better teacher.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	25	41.7	43.9	43.9
	Disagree	18	30	31.6	75.4
	Undecided	8	13.3	14	89.5
	Agree	4	6.7	7	96.5
	Strongly Agree	2	3.3	3.5	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

Categorical Results

Q1B Lacking a sense of coherence.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Positive	17	28.3	29.3	29.3
	Undecided	18	30	31	60.3
	Negative	23	38.3	39.7	100
	Total	58	96.7	100	
Missing	System	2	3.3		
Total		60	100		

Q2B Helps develop understanding of CT state standards.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Negative	23	38.3	40.4	40.4
	Undecided	10	16.7	17.5	57.9
	Positive	24	40	42.1	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

Q3B Aids the realities of education in contemporary schools.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Negative	35	58.3	61.4	61.4
	Undecided	10	167	17.5	78.9
	Positive	12	20	21.1	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

Q4B Prepares individuals for curriculum and assessment in the schools system.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Negative	34	56.7	59.6	59.6
	Undecided	10	16.7	17.5	77.2
	Positive	13	21.7	22.8	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

Q5B Helps guide in behavior management.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Negative	40	66.7	70.2	70.2
	Undecided	7	11.7	12.3	82.5
	Positive	10	16.7	17.5	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

Q6B Integrates pre-teaching education and current practice.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Negative	25	41.7	43.9	43.9
	Undecided	13	21.7	22.8	66.7
	Positive	19	31.7	33.3	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

Q10B Mentor knowledgeable of CT state standards.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Negative	4	6.7	7	7
	Undecided	11	18.3	19.3	26.3
	Positive	42	70	73.7	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

Q11B Mentor judges participants instructions.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Negative	10	16.7	17.5	17.5
	Undecided	11	18.3	19.	36.8
	Positive	36	60	63.2	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

Q12B Mentor teaches in a manner consistent with BEST.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Negative	33	55	57.9	57.9
	Undecided	14	23.3	24.6	82.5
	Positive	10	16.7	17.5	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

Q13B Mentor critically assesses teaching skills.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Negative	17	28.3	30.4	30.4
	Undecided	15	25	26.8	57.1
	Positive	24	40	42.9	100
	Total	56	93.3	100	
Missing	System	4	6.7		
Total		30	100		

Q14B Mentor helps evaluate and reflect on teaching techniques.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Negative	15	25	26.8	26.8
	Undecided	9	15	16.1	42.9
	Positive	32	53.3	57.1	100
	Total	56	93.3	100	
Missing	System	4	6.7		
Total		60	100		

Q15B Mentor uses "real-life" teaching strategies.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Negative	9	15	16.1	16.1
	Undecided	11	18.3	19.6	35.7
	Positive	36	60	64.3	100
	Total	56	93.3	100	
Missing	System	4	6.7		
Total		60	100		

Q16B Mentor assesses progress in relation to CT state standards.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Negative	19	31.7	33.3	33.3
	Undecided	11	18.3	19.3	52.6
	Positive	27	45	47.4	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

Q17B Mentor is in touch with realities of contemporary schools.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Negative	5	8.3	8.8	8.8
	Undecided	9	15	15.8	24.6
	Positive	43	71.7	75.4	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

Q18B Mentor is available on a regular basis.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Negative	9	15	15.8	15.8
	Undecided	6	10	10.5	26.3
	Positive	42	70	73.7	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

Q19B Mentor structures learning situations around real problems.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Negative	19	31.7	33.3	33.3
	Undecided	12	20	21.1	54.4
	Positive	26	43.3	45.6	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

Q20B Mentor is experienced in guiding individuals to be a better teacher.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Positive	43	71.7	75.4	75.4
	Undecided	8	13.3	14	89.5
	Negative	6	10	10.5	100
	Total	57	95	100	
Missing	System	3	5		
Total		60	100		

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